

## THIS PLACE MATTERS... The Historic Hockanum Falls

### Story of the Disappearing Waterfalls

The two waterfalls cascade down behind the old mill buildings in downtown Rockville, CT... the 1<sup>st</sup> drop is 40 feet and the 2<sup>nd</sup> nearly as much. Upon first look one wonders the history behind them, especially since the origin of this small town seems to be disappearing right before our eyes. Invasive growth of brush has all but obscured any view from the street of these magnificent waterfalls, and similar social events have all but obscured the glorious history of this small mill town as well.

These two waterfalls represent the historic origin of the town and its early mill industry that utilized water power to help drive the development of some of the earliest textile mills built in the area known as “The Rock” in 1821... which was a natural dam of solid stone that made a 40 foot drop from the Hockanum River into a small “Mill Pond” and then continued to cascade downstream to a 2<sup>nd</sup> drop, just behind the present Anocoil building in downtown.

*Some of the earliest recommendations for a city name paid homage to this origin in 1837, according to old records, and names suggested were “Vernon Falls” and “Frankfort” (in honor of Francis McLean, builder of the “Rock Mill”). Legend has it that Simon Chapman, who ran a local boarding house for mill workers, submitted the now familiar name “Rockville” because of the common expression used by these mill workers and villagers that they were “going to the Rock” when they went to work... Thus, “Rockville” became the official city name, although it was not until 1842 that Rockville acquired its own official post office. \**

The Rockville Downtown Association, Inc., partnering with the “Friends of the Hockanum River Linear Park Committee of Vernon, Inc.” has begun a project to rediscover the waterfalls, clear a safe viewing area for the public and light them up to enhance the visibility and bring long-overdue attention to the most scenic features that these falls have to offer. The design team has already secured a grant from the Connecticut Main Street Center and the “Preservation of Place” Program in cooperation with the Commission on Culture & Tourism with funds from the Community Investment Act of the State of Connecticut, that funds the feasibility study phase and the team has begun the task of raising funds for the implementation phase.

If we, as a society, lose sight of historic treasures such as these waterfalls, we have signaled to our children and to future generations that our origin is of no significance... which is not the message we should be conveying. Our goal is to illuminate this significance, and shine a light on our historic past, in hopes that our efforts may inspire additional preservation actions throughout our community.

We ask that everyone who reads this story tell a neighbor, friend or business associate about it and come to this website to support the project with your votes. The RDA website is [www.rdact.com](http://www.rdact.com) or you can call Cliff Edwards, the Executive Director, at 860-875-7439.

*Submitted by:* Clifford R. Edwards, RDA Executive Director & member of RDA Design Team

*\* excerpted from Wikipedia’s “History and Origin of Rockville, CT”*